



## SUCCESS STORY

# Businesswomen Gain Access to Finance

### **Women in Business Association increases membership and improves access to finance**



*Leah Gabaeme (left), Membership Campaign Coordinator, explains the benefits of WIBA membership to Florence Shagwa of Misiyose Insurance Agency.*

***The Women in Business Association increased its membership from 15 to 115 in four months, and implemented a savings mobilization scheme for its members.***

Southern African businesswomen often do not have the support of a strong private sector association to represent their interests. Frequently, they have difficulties in accessing financing and the regulatory regimes of the countries where they operate discriminate against them. While some studies indicate that as many as 75 percent of businesses in Botswana are woman-owned, many Botswanan women face similar challenges as they strive to achieve success with their businesses.

Formed in the early 1990s, Botswana's Women in Business Association (WIBA) sought to combat these obstacles by organizing businesswomen into a cohesive force for advocacy. But it has suffered from a lack of support and resources, and after 15 years only a handful of women were struggling to keep the organization alive.

In 2005, WIBA approached USAID's Southern African Global Competitiveness Hub for assistance, and the Hub identified two priority activities for the organization: (1) conduct a membership campaign and (2) implement a microfinance scheme for WIBA members.

In July 2006 the Hub recruited a membership campaign coordinator who spearheaded a recruitment drive designed to increase the size and scope of the organization. As a result of the successful four-month campaign, WIBA's membership grew from 15 to 115 and included businesswomen from a broad geographic, commercial and industrial scope.

At the same time, the Hub contracted a microfinance expert to study microfinance options and identify any unexploited niches that would give a broader base of women access to microfinance, and that WIBA could help administer, giving preference to its members. A short list of financial institutions was drawn up, and after each institution made a presentation to WIBA's board of directors, First National Bank of Botswana was selected to provide financial services to WIBA members. On April 11, 2007, WIBA and First National Bank signed a memorandum of understanding creating a savings mobilization scheme for WIBA.